CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Currently Amended) A semiconductor laser device comprising:

an active layer;

a lower cladding layer located on a first side of said active layer;

a first upper cladding layer located on a second side of said active layer, the second side being ~~on a~~ opposite the first side of the active layer;

an etching stopper layer located ~~opposite~~ at said first upper cladding layer on the ~~first~~ second side of said active layer; and

a second upper cladding layer located opposite said etching stopper layer, on the ~~first~~ second side of said active layer, and including a stripe protrusion, in which a stripe light-guiding channel is located, between said protrusion and said etching stopper layer, wherein said etching stopper layer is a single layer of a material different in composition from ~~a~~ materials of each of said lower, first upper, and second upper cladding layers, and has a refractive index ~~nearly equal to~~ within a range that is ± 5% of refractive index of each of said lower, first upper, and second upper cladding layers.

2. (Previously Presented) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 1, wherein said active layer contains GaInP, each of said lower, first upper, and second upper cladding layers contains AlGaInP, and said etching stopper layer contains $Al_xGa_{1-x}As$, where $0 < x < 1$.

3. (Currently Amended) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 2, wherein ~~said Al composition ratio~~ x is at least 0.45.

4. (Currently Amended) A semiconductor laser device comprising:

an active layer;

a lower cladding layer located on a first side of said active layer;

a first upper cladding layer located on a second side of said active layer, the second side being ~~on a~~ opposite the first side of the active layer; and

a second upper cladding layer located ~~opposite~~ at said first upper cladding layer, on the second side of said active layer, and including a stripe protrusion, in which a stripe light-guiding channel is located, between said protrusion and said second upper cladding layer, wherein said second upper cladding layer is a material different from material of said first upper cladding layer, and has a refractive index ~~nearly equal to~~ within a range ± 5% refractive index of said first upper cladding layer.

5. (Currently Amended) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 4, wherein said active layer contains GaInP, each of said lower cladding layer and said first upper cladding layer contains AlGaInP, and said second upper ~~clad~~ cladding layer contains $Al_xGa_{1-x}As$, where $0 < x < 1$.

6. (Previously Presented) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 5, wherein x is at least 0.45.

7. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 2, wherein x is no more than 0.9.

8. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 7, wherein x is approximately 0.7.

9. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 6, wherein x is no more than 0.9.

10. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 9, wherein x is approximately 0.7.